

# Public notices shed sunshine

There is a challenge each year to the state requirements of the publication of legal notices and other public information in legal newspapers. The Minnesota Newspaper Association is telling newspapers to expect a similar challenge this year in the state Legislature.

This may not be a change our local government officials want, but any change would have impact on the public and public officials statewide, including your local city council, county board, school board and others.

The system in place now acts a check and balance of local governments, such as cities, counties, school districts, municipal hospitals and similar local public governmental entities.

What checks and balances

would be in place if the local government was solely responsible for publishing its own public information on its own Web site?

What if a government official simply forgets to post a legal notice?

We're not predicting these scenarios locally, but this must be considered in the broader picture — what if a public official, for ulterior motives, forgets on purpose or what's to prevent a public official from "hiding" a legal notice in some dark cavern of a local government Web site?

While some local governments in the state have updated their Web sites, many remain clumsy and difficult to navigate. It's also doubtful that government Web sites will reach as much of the public as a newspaper and its Web site.

When public money is tight, it's even more important to make sure government bodies operate openly and can withstand scrutiny.

Publication in a legal newspaper is still the best to help ensure government is transparent.

— *Independent of Marshall, Feb. 5*

